



United Arab Emirates

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2001](#)

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The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates established in 1971. None has any democratically elected institutions or political parties. Traditional rule in the emirates generally has been patriarchal, with political allegiance defined in terms of loyalty to the tribal leaders. Political leaders in the emirates are not elected, but citizens may express their concerns directly to their leaders through traditional mechanisms, such as the open majlis, or council. In accordance with the 1971 Constitution, the seven emirate rulers constitute a Federal Supreme Council, the highest legislative and executive body. The Council selects a President and Vice President from its membership; the President in turn appoints the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Constitution requires the Council to meet annually, although individual leaders meet frequently in more traditional settings. The Cabinet manages the Federation on a day-to-day basis. A consultative body, the Federal National Council (FNC), consisting of 40 advisors appointed for 2-year terms by the emirate rulers, reviews proposed legislation, discusses the annual budget, and may question federal government ministers in open sessions. Each emirate retains control over its own oil and mineral wealth, some aspects of internal security, and some regulation of internal and external commerce. The Federal Government asserts primacy in matters of foreign and defense policy, some aspects of internal security, and increasingly in matters of law and the supply of some government services. The judiciary generally is independent, but its decisions are subject to review by the political leadership.

Each emirate maintains its own independent police force. While all emirate internal security organs theoretically are branches of one federal organization, in practice they operate with considerable independence. Security forces committed some abuses.

The UAE has a free market economy based on oil and gas production, trade, and light manufacturing. The Government owns the majority share of the petroleum production enterprise in the largest emirate, Abu Dhabi. The Emirate of Dubai is likewise an oil producer, as well as a growing financial and commercial center in the Gulf. The remaining five emirates have negligible petroleum or other resources and therefore depend in varying degrees on federal government subsidies, particularly for basic services such as health care, electricity, water, and education. The economy, with an estimated \$65.9 billion gross domestic product (GDP) provides citizens with a high per capita income, but it is heavily dependent on foreign skilled and unskilled workers, who constitute at least 80 percent of the 3.1 million general population.

The Government generally respected its citizens' rights in some areas; however, its record was poor in other areas. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. The Government also reportedly at times abused persons in custody, kept persons in incommunicado detention, and kept persons in detention after their release dates. The Government restricts the freedoms of speech and of the press. The press continued to avoid direct criticism of the Government and exercised self-censorship. The Government tightly restricts the freedoms of assembly and association, and imposes some restrictions on freedom of religion. Women play a subordinate role in society, although they continue to make progress in education and in the work force. The Government passed a law increasing maternity leave from 45 days to 6 months. Also, in October the Ruler of Sharjah appointed 5 women to serve on the emirate-wide 40-member Consultative Council. The Government severely restricts worker rights. Working conditions and abuse of foreign domestic servants are serious problems in an economy in which 98 percent of the private sector workforce is foreign. Trafficking in women and children is a problem.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

According to Amnesty International, Libyan national Abdullah Abu al-Ghazali died while in security force custody. On September 6, al-Ghazali's wife was informed that her husband had committed suicide while in detention. The reasons for al-Ghazali's arrest and the place of his detention remained unknown (see Section 1.d.).

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances; however, some cases of prolonged incommunicado detention could amount to forced disappearance (see Section 1.d.).

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitution prohibits torture or degrading treatment, and there were no confirmed reports of torture; however, there were some consistent but unconfirmed reports by foreign prisoners of beatings and confessions coerced from detainees by police during initial detention, which the Government maintained were groundless.

Shari'a (Islamic law) courts (except in Dubai) frequently impose flogging on Muslims found guilty of adultery, prostitution, and drug or alcohol abuse. In practice flogging is administered in accordance with Shari'a in order to prevent major or permanent injuries. The individual administering the lashing swings the whip using the forearm only. According to press accounts, punishments for adultery and prostitution have ranged from 39 to 200 lashes. Individuals convicted of drunkenness have been sentenced to 80 lashes. The Federal Supreme Court ruled in 1993 that convictions in the Shari'a courts do not necessarily require the imposition of Shari'a penalties on non-Muslims, but such sentences have been carried out in a few cases.

In June a Shari'a court sentenced the Indian imam of a mosque in the Emirate of Ras Al-Khaimah to a month in prison, 90 lashes, and then deportation because he spent time alone with a woman. The imam originally was charged with adultery because he was found at the home of one of his friends alone with a foreign national housemaid; however, the charges were changed to "cohabitation" because the prosecution could not prove the crime of adultery. The imam had not confessed and there were no witnesses. The housemaid was sentenced to 150 lashes in 3 sessions and deportation, and the owner of the house was sentenced to 90 lashes and deportation.

Prison conditions reportedly are mixed, depending on the location. Dubai prison conditions generally meet international standards. Abu Dhabi conditions typically are adequate, but Spartan, and rural prison conditions at times are inadequate. In central prisons that hold long-term inmates, prisoners are provided with food, medical care, and adequate sanitation facilities, but sleep on slabs built into cell walls or on the floor. Each prisoner is provided with four blankets. Only some blocks of the central prisons are air-conditioned during the intense heat and humidity of the summer. The Government has phased in air-conditioning in 80 per cent of the prisons; completion is scheduled for summer 2003. Prisoners with medical conditions are placed in air-conditioned rooms during the summer months. Prisoners not under investigation and not involved in drug cases may receive visitors up to three times each week and may also make occasional local telephone calls. Most prisoners in Dubai are allowed family visits and a number of telephone calls. Men and women are housed separately. Pretrial detainees are kept separately from convicted criminals until the trial begins. They then are placed in the same wing as convicted individuals. Juveniles are housed separately from adults.

The Government does not permit independent monitoring of prison conditions.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest, search, detention, or imprisonment; however, the law permits incommunicado detention, and at times, prisoners are incarcerated for as long as several months beyond their release dates. The law prohibits arrest or search without probable cause.

Under the Criminal Procedures Code, the police must report arrests within 48 hours to the Attorney General, who must determine within the next 24 hours whether to charge, release, or order further detention pending an investigation. The Attorney General may order that detainees be held for up to 21 days without charge. After that time, the authorities must obtain a court order for further detention without charge.

The Federal Constitution provides accused persons the right to a speedy trial. This right most often is invoked

in civil cases, with civil defendants at times demanding same-day disposition of the cases filed against them. Authorities generally bring criminal defendants to trial in a reasonable time, with the exception of drug-related cases, for which the authorities must inform the Office of the President (also known as the Diwan) of the charges.

Trials may last a substantial period of time, depending on the seriousness of the charges, number of witnesses, and availability of judges. There is no formal system of bail, but the authorities temporarily may release detainees who deposit money or an important document such as a passport. The law permits incommunicado detention, which is mostly used in allegedly sensitive cases in which the police claim that communication between the accused and a third party could jeopardize their investigation. In such cases, no one is notified that the person has been arrested and is being held, which could amount to forced disappearance (see Section 1.b.). Those arrested on regular charges are allowed generally to telephone third parties while in detention.

Defendants in cases involving loss of life, including involuntary manslaughter, may be denied release in accordance with the law. However, bail usually is permitted after a payment of compensation, which is a form of a financial penalty imposed on defendants in criminal cases in which a death has been caused.

According to Amnesty International, on August 31, the authorities detained Abdullah Abu al-Ghazali, a Libyan national, who left Libya in 1989 to avoid arrest because of his religious activities, while he was attending his local mosque. The reason for his arrest and the place of his detention were unknown. On September 6, the authorities reportedly told al-Ghazali's wife that her husband had committed suicide while in detention (see Section 1.a.). On September 10, Amnesty International also reported the detention of four additional Libyan nationals between May and August, whose whereabouts and reason for detention were unknown. In October a government official reported that the four additional Libyan nationals—one arrested in May, two arrested in July and one arrested in August—had been expelled from the country in September because the Government was unable to find evidence linking the four detainees to the al-Qaida terrorist organization.

Review of criminal cases by the Office of the President in Abu Dhabi and bureaucratic delays in processing prisoners or releasing them, at times result in detainees serving additional, unnecessary time in the central prisons (see Section 1.e.). Some bureaucratic delays have kept prisoners incarcerated for as long as several months beyond their court-mandated release dates.

In June on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the Prophet Mohammed, President Zayid pardoned approximately 6,000 prisoners (of which about 2,000 were women), including about 700 citizens and 5,300 expatriates, from all 7 emirates. The prisoners either were awaiting trial or serving sentence terms from 3 to 5 years. Most of the prisoners pardoned were foreign nationals convicted of violating immigration laws. The decree also included prisoners convicted of embezzlement, drug-related offenses, brawling, drinking, fighting, engaging in premarital sex, and swindling, but it did not include prisoners convicted of murder, rape and kidnapping. Most of the pardoned foreign nationals were to be deported, while those jailed for financial crimes were to be given a grace period to settle amounts still owed. Press reports indicated that security sources in Abu Dhabi stated that the presidential pardon covered more than 65 percent of prisoners in all jails, noting that the total number of prisoners before the pardon stood at nearly 11,000.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile, and it is not practiced.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary; however, its decisions are subject to review by the political leadership. Most judges are noncitizen Arabs, whose mandate is subject to periodic renewal by the Government; however, the number of citizens serving as public prosecutors and judges, particularly at the federal level, continued to grow.

There is a dual system of Shari'a and civil courts. The civil courts generally are part of the federal system and are answerable to the Federal Supreme Court, located in Abu Dhabi, which has the power of judicial review as well as original jurisdiction in disputes between emirates or between the Federal Government and individual emirates. The Emirates of Dubai and Ras Al-Khaimah have local courts, which have jurisdiction over matters within their territory that the Constitution or federal legislation does not specifically reserve to the federal system.

Each emirate administers Shari'a courts. In some emirates, in addition to matters of personal status, these courts consider all types of civil and commercial cases as well as serious criminal cases. They act in accordance with traditional Islamic law and practice, but also must answer to the Federal Supreme Court.

Dubai has a special Shi'a council to act on matters pertaining to Shi'a family law (see Section 5).

Legal counsel may represent defendants in both court systems. Under the Criminal Procedures Code, the accused has a right to counsel in all cases involving a capital crime or possible life imprisonment. Only the Emirate of Dubai has a public defender's office. If the defendant is indigent, the Government will provide counsel; however, in Dubai the Government provides indigents with counsel only in felony cases. The Supreme Court ruled in 1993 that a defendant in an appeals case has a "fundamental right" to select his attorney and that this right supersedes a judge's power to appoint an attorney for the defendant.

The right to legal counsel is interpreted to provide that the accused is entitled to an attorney only after the police have completed their investigation. Thus, the police may question accused persons--sometimes for days or weeks, as in narcotics cases--without the benefit of legal counsel.

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. There are no jury trials. The number of judges sitting for a case depends on the type of crime alleged; three judges normally sit for criminal cases. All trials are public, except for national security cases and those deemed by the judge likely to harm public morality.

Each court system has an appeals process. Death sentences may be appealed to the ruler of the emirate in which the offense was committed or to the President of the Federation. Non-Muslims who are tried for criminal offenses in Shari'a courts may receive civil penalties at the discretion of the judge. Shari'a penalties imposed on non-Muslims may be overturned or modified by a higher court.

In cases in which a defendant is acquitted of a crime, the prosecutor may appeal the acquittal to a higher court. If the case is appealed, the higher court reviews the case and may receive more and new evidence. If convinced of the defendant's guilt, the appellate court may set aside the lower court's verdict of not guilty and enter a verdict of guilty with an order that the defendant pay compensation. The appellate standard for overturning an acquittal is reportedly "without the slightest doubt of guilt."

In a widely reported case in January, a Shari'a court acquitted a Filipina housemaid on the grounds of self-defense for killing her citizen employer when he tried to rape her on the day she arrived in the country in Ras Al-Khaimah. Although she had been acquitted, the Filipina, who had been detained for 2 years since her arrest, was held without bail because of the prosecutor's right to appeal the case. The deceased citizen's family persuaded the prosecutor to appeal the acquittal and in May, the Shari'a court's acquittal was overturned. The appellate court sentenced her to 2 years' imprisonment and ordered her to pay \$43,000 (150,000 dirhams) compensation. Since she had already served over 2 years since her arrest, the appellate court ordered the defendant to be released and deported once the compensation was paid. The Filipino Embassy appealed to the Filipino community that collected funds to pay the compensation, and the defendant was released and deported in August.

In cases in which a defendant is sentenced to death, the sentence may be reduced to a term of imprisonment if the victim or victim's family provides a statement to the court forgiving the defendant. This waiver by the victim or victim's family is sometimes made in exchange for a financial payment from the defendant.

In April the press reported on a case in which a man convicted of kidnaping, beating, and repeatedly raping an 11-year-old girl was released from prison after serving only 2 years. The victim's family waived the death penalty in exchange for \$69,400 (250,000 dirhams) compensation, and the defendant's sentence was commuted to 10 years. After 2 years, the defendant had only paid \$41,700 (150,000 dirhams) compensation to the victim's family and convinced the victim's family to accept this lower amount as full compensation. At that time, the defendant was released from prison over the victim's family's protest because he had served only 2 years of his 10-year term.

The Presidential Diwan, following traditional prerogatives, maintains the practice of reviewing many types of criminal and civil offenses (such as alcohol use, drug-related cases, firearm use, cases involving personal injury, and cases affecting tribal harmony) before cases are referred to the prosecutor's office. However, this practice is not as prevalent as in past years, and such cases usually are referred directly to the prosecutor's office. The Diwan also reviews sentences passed by judges and reserves the right to return cases to the courts on appeal. The Diwan's involvement, which typically occurs when the case involves parties from two different emirates or a citizen and a noncitizen, leads to long delays prior to and following the judicial process, causing some prisoners to remain in prison after they have completed their sentence. There are reports of intervention by other emirates' rulers in specific cases of personal interest.

The military has its own court system based on Western military judicial practice. Military tribunals try only military personnel. There is no separate national security court system. Convicted criminals may request a

pardon at any time, except if convicted of serious offenses such as murder.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits entry into homes without the owner's permission, except in accordance with the law. Only police officers and public prosecutors carrying a warrant are permitted entry into homes. If the authorities enter a home without a warrant, their actions are considered illegal and the evidence obtained thereby is suppressible. Officers' actions in searching premises are subject to review, and officers are subject to disciplinary action if they act irresponsibly. Local custom and practice place a high value on privacy, and entry into private homes without the owner's permission is rare. A female police officer must be present during the search of a private home when male family members are absent. There is no known surveillance of private correspondence, although there have been cases of incoming international mail being censored. Foreigners have received sealed publications, such as magazines, through the international mail in which pictures of the naked human figure have been blackened over with a marking pen.

Family law for Muslims is governed by Shari'a and the local Shari'a courts. As such, Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims. Such a marriage may result in both partners being arrested and tried. However, Muslim men, are free to marry women "of the book," that is, Muslim, Christian or Jewish women. Men and women may be arrested and imprisoned for committing adultery.

In September the Emirate of Sharjah promulgated a "decency" law, or Code of Conduct, setting standards for dress and behavior in public. The Code of Conduct includes a dress code for men and women, a dress code for attending mosques, and a dress code for beaches. The Code of Conduct also lists prohibited behavior, including prohibitions against wearing swimwear in streets or other public places; against men and women being alone in public places or at suspicious times and in suspicious circumstances if they are not connected by a "legally acceptable" relationship; against publicly bothering others or disturbing the peace with acts of vulgarity or loud noise; and against publicly engaging in acts of harassment that violate public decency.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. Most persons, especially foreign nationals out of fear of deportation, refrain from criticizing the Government in public. Freedom of press also is restricted. The country's three English-language newspapers are privately owned, as are four of its six Arabic-language newspapers; however, privately owned newspapers receive government subsidies. The government-owned Emirates News Agency regularly provides all newspapers with themes for editorials and with articles regarding domestic and international issues, which then usually are printed verbatim.

By law the Ministry of Information must license all publications. The law also governs content and contains a list of proscribed subjects. Government officials reportedly warn journalists when they publish material deemed politically or culturally sensitive.

Journalists practice self-censorship when reporting on government policy, the ruling families, national security, religion, and relations with neighboring states. However, if given at least implied permission to report on such matters, critical articles are published. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Sultan Bin Zayid Al-Nahyan was reported in October 1999 as stating that uncovering inefficiencies in government was one of the duties of the press. Subsequently, newspapers began publishing articles critical of alleged inefficiencies in the delivery of government services and an expose on life in the Dubai women's central prison was published in August 2000.

From September 2000 until mid-2001, the Government banned 10 prominent citizens, including 4 university professors, from publishing opinion pieces in the country's Arabic- and English-language press and giving local television interviews. The Ministry of Information imposed the ban after the writers supported in the press over 100 employees who had been laid off by the government-financed Emirates Media Corporation. After the ban was lifted in mid-year, the citizens resumed publishing in newspapers and other media outlets.

Emirates Media, which publishes Al-Ittihad newspaper and owns Abu Dhabi's radio and television stations, forbids all its employees, including journalists, from speaking with representatives of foreign diplomatic missions without prior approval, although the rule is not enforced in practice.

A press club in Dubai provides facilities for the international press, including access to information, and serves as a site for open discussions between political figures and journalists. Also, Dubai Media City has been operating as part of the Dubai Free Zone since November 2000, with fewer formal restrictions on the content of print and broadcast material produced there. Dubai Media City hosts a wide range of Western and Arab media outlets.

All television and radio stations, with the exception of Ajman Emirate's local television station, are government-owned and conform to government reporting guidelines. These unpublished guidelines are not always applied consistently. Satellite receiving dishes are widespread and provide access to international broadcasts without apparent censorship. Censors at the Ministry of Information and Culture review imported newspapers, periodicals, books, films, and videos; they ban or censor before distribution any material considered pornographic, violent, derogatory to Islam, supportive of certain Israeli Government positions, unduly critical of friendly countries, or critical of the Government or the ruling families.

Local access to the Internet, which is open to public use with an estimated 400,000 users, is through a state-owned monopoly. A proxy server blocks material regarded as pornographic or as promoting radical Islamic ideologies. In most cases, the proxy server does not appear to block news services, political expression unrelated to radical Islam, or material originating from specific countries. The Internet monopoly solicits suggestions from users regarding "objectionable" sites, and at times the Government has responded by briefly blocking some politically oriented sites, which were, after an apparent review, later unblocked. The monopoly also blocks commercial "voice-chat" sites on the Internet.

The unwritten but generally recognized ban on criticism of the Government also restricts academic freedom. Academic materials destined for schools in the country are subject to censorship. For example, at Zayid University, female students are banned from reading texts in which the human body is pictured or sexuality is featured (see Section 5).

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Government tightly restricts the freedom of peaceful assembly. Organized public gatherings require a government permit, which rarely is granted.

Each emirate determines its own practice on public gatherings. Some emirates are relatively tolerant of seminars and conferences on sensitive subjects. Citizens normally confine their political discussions to the numerous gatherings or majlis, which are held in private homes. There are no restrictions on such gatherings.

The Government tightly restricts freedom of association. Unauthorized political organizations are prohibited. All nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) must be registered with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; however, a number of unregistered local NGO's operate in the country. Also, all private associations, including children's clubs, charitable groups, and hobby associations, must be approved and licensed by local authorities, although this requirement is enforced loosely in some emirates. Private associations must follow the Government's censorship guidelines if they publish any material. There are no political parties, independent human rights groups, or trade unions (see Sections 3, 4, and 6.a.). A June protest by 500 foreign workers took place in front of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Dubai (see Section 6.a. and 6.e.).

c. Freedom of Religion

The Federal Constitution designates Islam as the official religion, and Islam also is the official religion of all seven of the individual emirates of the federal union. The Federal Constitution also provides for the freedom to exercise religious worship in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals. The Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government controls all Sunni mosques and prohibits proselytizing by non-Muslims.

Virtually all Sunni mosques are government funded or subsidized; about 5 percent of Sunni mosques are entirely private, and several large mosques have large private endowments. The Federal Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs distributes weekly guidance to both Sunni and Shi'a shaikhs regarding subject matter, themes, and content of religious sermons, and ensures that clergy do not deviate frequently or significantly from approved topics in their sermons. All Sunni imams are employees of either the Federal Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs or individual emirate departments. The Emirate of Dubai's Department of Islamic Affairs and Endowments controls the appointment of preachers in that Emirate's private mosques, as well as the conduct of their work.

The Shi'a minority, which is concentrated in the northern emirates, is free to worship and maintain its own mosques. All Shi'a mosques are considered private and receive no funds from the Government. The Government does not appoint shaikhs for Shi'a mosques. Shi'a Muslims in Dubai may pursue Shi'a family law cases through a special Shi'a council rather than the Shari'a courts.

The Government does not recognize all non-Muslim religions. Considerable local autonomy in religious matters resides in the individual emirates. In those emirates that officially recognize and thereby grant a legal identity to non-Muslim religious groups, only a limited number of Christian groups are granted this recognition. While recognizing the difference among Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity, the authorities make no legal distinction between Christian groups, particularly Protestants. Several often-unrelated Christian congregations are required to share common facilities because of official limitations on the number of Christian denominations that are recognized officially. Partly as a result of emirate policies regarding recognition of non-Muslim denominations, facilities for Christian congregations are far greater in number and size than those for non-Christian and non-Muslim groups, despite the fact that Christians are a small minority of non-Muslim foreigners.

Major cities have Christian churches, some of which were built on land donated by the ruling families of the emirates in which they are located. Early in the year, ground was broken for the construction of several churches on a parcel of land in Jebel Ali that was donated by the Government of Dubai for four Protestant congregations and a Catholic congregation. The Catholic Church, Dubai Emirate's second, opened in November. In May the Crown Prince of Dubai authorized the construction of a Greek Orthodox Church on donated land. Also during the year, the Catholic Church received permission to establish a secondary parochial school in Fujairah. Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah also are home to Catholic primary and secondary schools.

Dubai permits a Hindu temple and two Sikh temples to operate. There are no such temples elsewhere in the country. There are no Buddhist temples; however, Buddhists, along with Hindus and Sikhs in cities without temples, conduct religious ceremonies in private homes without interference. There is a Baha'i cemetery in Abu Dhabi Emirate. There are only two operating cremation facilities and associated cemeteries for the large Hindu community, one in Dubai and one in Sharjah. Official permission must be obtained to use the cremation facilities in every instance, posing a hardship for the large Hindu community.

The Government follows a policy of tolerance towards non-Muslim religions and in practice interferes very little in the religious activities of non-Muslims. Apparent differences in the treatment of Muslim and non-Muslim groups often have their origin in the dichotomy between citizens and noncitizens rather than religious difference.

The Government permits foreign clergy to minister to foreign populations, and non-Muslim religious groups are permitted to engage in private charitable activities and to send their children to private schools. Apart from donated land for the construction of churches and other religious facilities, including cemeteries, non-Muslim groups are not supported financially or subsidized by the Government. However, they are permitted to raise money from among their congregations and to receive financial support from abroad. Christian churches are permitted to advertise certain church functions openly in the press, such as memorial services.

The conversion of Muslims to other religions is regarded with extreme antipathy. Therefore, although non-Muslims in the country are free to practice their religion, they are not allowed to proselytize publicly or distribute religious literature under penalty of criminal prosecution and imprisonment. While there is no law against missionary activities, authorities have threatened to revoke the residence permits of persons suspected of such activities. In March Dubai police briefly detained four visiting noncitizens for handing out Christian religious materials, including videos and CD-ROMs, on a public street in contravention of laws barring non-Muslim proselytizing. Authorities held their passports for a short period until a court ordered their deportation. Customs authorities have questioned the entry of large quantities of religious materials (such as Bibles and hymnals) that they deemed in excess of the normal requirements of existing congregations, although in most instances the questions have been resolved and the items have been admitted.

Customs authorities reportedly are less likely to question the importation of Christian religious items than other non-Muslim religious items, although in virtually all instances importation of the material in question eventually was permitted.

Although emirate immigration authorities routinely ask foreigners to declare their religious affiliation, the Government does not collect or analyze this information, and religious affiliation is not a factor in the issuance or renewal of visas or residence permits.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

There are no limitations on freedom of movement or relocation within the country, except for security areas such as defense and oil installations.

Unrestricted foreign travel and emigration are permitted to male citizens, except those involved in legal disputes under adjudication. Custom dictates that a husband may bar his wife, minor male and female children, and adult unmarried daughters from leaving the country. All citizens have the right to return.

There is a small population of "stateless" residents either without citizenship or proof of citizenship to any country. Many such families have lived in the country for more than one generation. Many stateless residents originally were from Iran and South Asia; other stateless residents include Bedouins or the descendants of Bedouins who are unable to prove that they are of UAE origin. There is no formal procedure for naturalization, although foreign women receive citizenship by marriage to a citizen, and anyone may receive a passport by presidential fiat. Because they are not of the original tribal groups, naturalized citizens may have their passports and citizenship status revoked for criminal or politically provocative actions; however, such revocations are rare, and reportedly none occurred during the year.

A child born to a citizen man and noncitizen woman acquires citizenship at birth. However, a child born to a citizen woman and noncitizen man does not acquire citizenship. In June the federal Cabinet approved the issuance of labor cards to the children of female citizens and foreign men, which allows the adult children to accept employment in the country legally. Beginning in July, the Emirate of Dubai began issuing passports to children of citizen women married to foreigners. Although not sanctioned by law, employers generally require foreign national employees to surrender their passports as a condition of employment. In practice this prevents international travel or repatriation by foreign national employees without their employers' consent and especially affects such employees in the resolution of employment disputes. Employers sometimes blacklist with immigration authorities employees with whom they are engaged in contract disputes (see Section 6.e.).

Citizens are not restricted in seeking or changing employment. However, foreign nationals in specific occupations, primarily professional, may not change employers without first leaving the country for 6 months (see Section 6.e.).

The Government has not formulated a formal policy regarding refugees, asylees, or first asylum. It may detain persons seeking refugee status, particularly non-Arabs, while they await resettlement in a third country.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Citizens do not have the right to change their government. There are no popular elections or democratic institutions, and citizens do not have the right to form political parties. Federal executive and legislative power is in the hands of the Federal Supreme Council, a body composed of the rulers of the seven emirates, that elects from its members the country's President and Vice-President. Decisions at the federal level generally are made by consensus among the rulers, their families, and other leading families. The seven emirate rulers, their extended families, and those persons and families to whom they are allied by historical ties, marriage, or common interest hold political and economic power in their respective emirates.

A federal consultative body, called the Federal National Council (FNC), consists of 40 advisers appointed by the rulers. Advisors are drawn from each emirate, with proportion based on emirate population. The FNC has no legislative authority but it may question ministers and make policy recommendations to the Cabinet. Its sessions usually are open to the public.

The choice of appointing a new emirate ruler falls to the ruling family in consultation with other prominent tribal figures. By tradition rulers and ruling families are presumed to have the right to rule, but their incumbency ultimately depends on the quality of their leadership and their responsiveness to their subjects' needs. Emirate rulers are accessible, in varying degrees, to citizens who have a problem or a request.

The percentage of women in government and politics does not correspond to their numbers in the population. Tradition rather than the law limits the political role of women. Women are free to hold government positions, but there are few women in senior positions. There are no female members of the FNC. President Zayid's wife, Shaikha Fatima, who is chairwoman of the Women's Federation, regularly calls for the appointment of women as special observers at the FNC. Such observers would learn the procedures of the FNC, and some later ostensibly would be appointed as members. No observers had been named by year's end. In October the Ruler of Sharjah appointed 5 women to serve on the emirate-wide, 40-member Consultative Council. The new female Council members were appointed to the Council's newly formed Family Development Committee; however, they reportedly are not limited to working on social issues and may also join the Council's other committees. Other women in senior government positions include an undersecretary in the Ministry of Labor

and Social Affairs and an assistant undersecretary for planning and evaluation in the Ministry of Education.

In a number of press interviews, Shaikha Fatima has claimed that women participate in the preparation of legislation dealing with social issues through recommendations made by the Women's Federation, and that women are only "steps away" from full political participation. At the same time, she emphasized her view that the eventual appointment of women to the FNC and other government positions would be "a responsibility rather than an honor," requiring careful prior preparation.

Although the small Shi'a minority has enjoyed commercial success, few Shi'as hold top positions in the Federal Government.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

There are no independent human rights groups. Government restrictions on freedom of speech, the press, and public association would make it difficult for such groups to investigate and publicly criticize the Government's human rights restrictions. Informal public discussions of human rights, press reports of international human rights forums' activities, and media coverage of selected local human rights problems, such as foreign workers' conditions, are increasing public awareness of human rights.

Foreign NGO's have worked with embassies and the police and immigration authorities in providing shelter for underage camel jockeys, as well as assistance with their repatriation. The Red Crescent Society, a quasi-governmental organization in the UAE, is affiliated with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. A human rights section exists within Dubai Emirate's police force to monitor allegations of human rights abuses. In addition the Jurists' Association has created a Human Rights Committee, whose focus is primarily on human rights issues regarding the region and Islam.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equality before the law without regard to race, nationality, religious beliefs, or social status. However, there is institutional and cultural discrimination based on sex, nationality, and religion.

Women

There are some reported cases of spousal abuse. The laws protect women from verbal abuse or harassment from men, and violators are subject to criminal action. Police units are stationed at major public hospitals so that victims of abuse may file complaints, which would fall under the jurisdiction of the Shari'a courts; in addition, attending physicians may call upon the police to interview suspected victims of abuse. However, women sometimes are reluctant to file formal charges for social, cultural, and economic reasons. When abuse is reported to the local police, authorities may take action to protect the complainant. There continue to be credible reports of physical and sexual abuse of female domestic servants by some local and foreign employers (see Section 6.e.).

Trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation is a problem (see Section 6.f.).

Prostitution is illegal; however, it has become an increasingly open phenomenon in recent years, particularly in Dubai. No accurate statistics are available. However, substantial numbers of women arrive from the states of the former Soviet Union, Africa, East Asia, Eastern Europe, and other states of the Middle East for temporary stays during which they engage in prostitution and possibly other activities connected with organized crime (see Section 6.f.). There is credible evidence to suggest that the majority of these women seek to enter the country in order to make substantially more money than they could earn in their home countries by engaging in prostitution.

Women play a subordinate role in the family-centered society because of traditional attitudes regarding women's duties and early marriages. There are no legal prohibitions against women owning property or businesses; however, there are restrictions on ownership by women. For example, women must inherit property or businesses from a father or husband, or, if unmarried, receive a grant of land from the ruling family in the emirate in which they reside. In the case of women who are married, the land must be granted to the husbands. Cultural attitudes also deter ownership by women. A woman's property is not otherwise commingled with that of her husband, and she retains control of her separate property during the marriage. Custom dictates that a husband may bar his wife, minor male and female children, and adult unmarried daughters from leaving the country (see Section 2.d.), and a married woman may not accept employment without her husband's written consent, although such permission usually is granted.

Shari'a is applied in personal status cases. The law permits men to have more than one wife, but not more than four, at a time, and the practice is widespread. Divorce is permissible. A woman may be granted a divorce if she can prove that her husband has deliberately stayed away from her for 3 months and has not paid for her upkeep, or for the maintenance of her children. Divorced women are granted custody of female children until they reach the age of maturity; they are granted temporary custody of male children until they reach the age of 12. If the mother is deemed unfit, custody reverts to the next able female relative on the mother's side. A woman who remarries may forfeit her right to the custody of children from a previous marriage.

The law prohibits cohabitation by unmarried couples. The Government may imprison and deport noncitizen women if they bear children out of wedlock. In the event that a court sentences a woman to prison for such an offense, local authorities, at the request of the prisoner, may hold the newborn children in a special area within the confines of the prison or place them with a relative. In rare cases, children are held in other facilities until the mother's release. In Dubai Emirate, unmarried pregnant women must marry the father of the child; both parties are subject to arrest for fornication.

There are no legal prohibitions against a woman owning her own business. Traditionally, professional women, including doctors, architects, and lawyers, have not faced restrictions in licensing businesses in their names. However, there are credible reports that citizen women attempting to license businesses in the import-export sector, particularly in the Emirate of Dubai, encounter greater scrutiny than men. The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce operates occasional programs to encourage small business entrepreneurship by women. Women who work outside the home do not receive equal benefits, such as housing, and may face discrimination in promotion. In July the FNC approved a law increasing maternity leave from 45 days to a maximum of 6 months--2 months with full pay, 2 additional months of nursing leave with half salary, and the possibility of 2 more months without salary. A number of women's groups have been pressing the Government to grant mothers 3 months of maternity leave at full pay and to provide day care facilities at the workplace.

Opportunities for women have grown in government service, education, private business, and health services. Citizen and noncitizen women constitute 15 percent of the national workforce. The Federal Government publicly has encouraged citizen women to join the workforce, ensuring public sector employment for all that apply. According to the available statistics, women constitute 100 percent of nursery school teachers, 55 percent of primary school teachers, 65 percent of intermediate and secondary school teachers, 54 percent of health care workers, and 40 percent of all government employees. Women also constitute 4 percent of the military.

Sexual harassment is prohibited by law. There are some reports of sexual harassment in the workplace, but it is believed to be underreported. Sexual harassment outside the workplace and sexual discrimination are widespread. As a form of deterrence, Dubai-based newspapers regularly publish pictures of men arrested in Dubai for harassing women in public places.

Women continue to make rapid progress in education. They constitute over 75 percent of the student body at the UAE University in Al-Ain. UAE University has separate campuses for men and women, largely because women, unlike men, rarely study abroad. Zayid University, an all-women, state-run university, has campuses in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The state-run Higher Colleges of Technology has five sets of separate campuses for men and women in five emirates. Sharjah University, a private university located in Sharjah, has separate campuses for men and women. The American Universities in Dubai and Sharjah, also private institutions, are coeducational. However, academic materials are subject to censorship, and female students are banned from reading texts in which the human body is pictured or sexuality is featured (see Section 2.a.).

Women officially are encouraged to continue their education, and government-sponsored women's centers provide adult education and technical training courses. The federal armed forces accept female volunteers, who may enroll in a special training course that was begun after the Gulf War. The Dubai Police College also recruits women; many are deployed at airports, immigration offices, and women's prisons.

Children

The Government is committed to the welfare of child citizens. Children who are citizens receive free public education through the university level, receive free health care, and are assured housing. Citizens also are eligible to receive aid from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare for sons and daughters who are under the age of 18, unmarried, or have disabilities.

The Government early in the year banned noncitizen resident children from attending public school, beginning with the 2001-02 academic year. Consequently, parents of such children must bear the considerable expense of a private education. In September the Ministry of Education and Youth excluded from the public school ban those noncitizen children living in rural areas that lack private schools. The Government also eliminated free

health care for noncitizen resident children and adults.

Citizen children are required to attend school--segregated by gender--through the sixth grade, the last grade of primary education, when children may be as young as 10 or 11 years old. However, compulsory education is not enforced, and some children, both girls and boys, do not attend school.

The use of young foreign national boys as camel jockeys, who are subjected to harsh conditions, is a continuing problem (see Sections 6.d and 6.f.). There were also reports of girls being trafficked to the country for the purpose of prostitution (see Section 6.f.).

Persons with Disabilities

There is no federal legislation requiring accessibility for persons with disabilities. However, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs sponsors centers that provide facilities and services to persons with physical or mental disabilities. Initiatives range from monthly social aid funds, special education, and transportation assistance, to sending a team to the Special Olympics. The Government and quasi-government entities also provide a significant amount of nongovernmental financial assistance, services, and emotional support to persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Discrimination based on national origin, while not legally sanctioned, is prevalent, and occurs in most areas of daily life, including employment, housing, and social interaction. Employment, immigration, and security policy, as well as cultural attitudes towards the very substantial number of foreign workers are conditioned by national origin.

It is estimated that more than 50 percent of foreign workers are from the Indian subcontinent. Noncitizens are denied access to some free services provided by the Government, including education, health care, and social and recreational club memberships.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law prohibits workers the right to form or join unions. There are no unions. The law prohibits strikes. During the year, there were several unprecedented sit-ins by workers in front of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs offices in Dubai to protest nonpayment of wages. Foreign workers, who make up more than 98 percent of the Emirates' private sector workforce, risk deportation if they attempt to organize unions or to strike.

Since 1995 the UAE has been suspended from the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation insurance programs because of the Government's lack of compliance with internationally recognized worker rights standards.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law does not grant workers the right to engage in collective bargaining, and it is not practiced. However, some professional associations are granted greater freedom to raise work-related concerns, to lobby the Government for redress, or to file a grievance with the Government. Workers in the industrial and service sectors normally are employed under contracts that are subject to review by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The Ministry of Interior's Naturalization and Residency Administration is responsible for reviewing the contracts of foreign domestic employees as part of residency permit processing. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the pay satisfies the employee's basic needs and secures a means of living. For the resolution of work-related disputes, workers must rely on conciliation committees organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs or on special labor courts.

Labor laws do not cover government employees, domestic servants, and agricultural workers. The latter two groups face considerable difficulty in obtaining assistance to resolve disputes with employers. While any worker may seek redress through the courts, this process places a heavy financial burden on those earning lower incomes.

Businesses operating in the country's free trade zones are exempt from compliance with some federal laws,

such as commercial agency laws; however, they are not exempt from compliance with federal labor laws.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

Forced or compulsory labor is illegal. However, some employment agents bring foreign workers to the country under conditions approaching indenture. There are credible reports that some women, who are brought to the country for service sector employment, later are forced into prostitution (see Section 6.f.). The Government prohibits forced and bonded child labor and generally enforces this prohibition effectively. However, the use of small children as camel jockeys is a problem. There continue to be credible reports of hundreds of underage boys from South Asia, mainly between 4 and 10 years of age, being used as camel jockeys (see Sections 6.d. and 6.f.).

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

Labor regulations prohibit employment of persons under the age of 15 and have special provisions for employing those 15 to 18 years of age. The Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible for enforcing the regulations. Other regulations permit employers to employ only adult foreign workers. The Government does not issue visas for foreign workers under the age of 16 years. With the exception of camel jockeys, child labor is not tolerated.

There continue to be credible reports that hundreds of underage boys from South Asia, mainly between 4 and 10 years of age, continue to be used as camel jockeys (see Sections 6.d. and 6.f.). Since 1993 the Government has prohibited the use of children under the age of 15 as camel jockeys and the use of jockeys who do not weigh more than 99 pounds. However, credible sources report that almost all camel jockeys are children under the minimum employment age. Relevant laws in some cases are enforced against criminal trafficking rings, but not against those who own racing camels and employ the children, because such owners come from powerful local families that are in effect above the law. According to credible sources, there were at least 25 cases during the year of underage camel jockeys who were repatriated to their countries of origin, mainly Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In April a 7-year-old Bangladeshi boy working as a camel jockey was injured during a camel race in Dubai. After being repatriated to Bangladesh, the boy died from kidney damage resulting from those injuries. In September 2000, the Abu Dhabi police took into protective custody and repatriated a 10-year-old Pakistani boy who allegedly had been kidnaped from his village in Pakistan and brought to the country to work as a jockey in camel races. Police reportedly are investigating several such cases; however, by year's end, no charges against those who employed the boys had been filed.

The Government prohibits forced and bonded child labor and generally enforces this prohibition effectively (see Section 6.c.).

The Government ratified ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor on June 28.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Approximately 98 percent of the private sector workforce consist of foreigners. There are a considerable number of skilled foreign nationals in the country who are employed under favorable working conditions. However, it also is a destination for a large number of unskilled workers, including up to 250,000 domestic servants, most of them women from South and East Asia, and an even larger number of unskilled male workers, mostly from South Asia. These unskilled laborers actively compete for jobs in the country and other Gulf countries, and many are willing to work under poor conditions because salaries are significantly higher than in their home countries.

The standard workday is 8 hours per day; the standard workweek is 6 days per week; however, these standards are not enforced strictly. Certain types of workers, notably domestic servants, may be obliged to work longer than the mandated standard. The law also provides for a minimum of 24 days per year of annual leave plus 10 national and religious holidays. In addition manual workers are not required to work outdoors when the temperature exceeds 112 degrees Fahrenheit.

There is no legislated or administrative minimum wage; rather, supply and demand determines compensation. Compensation depends on occupation and employer and ranges from \$109 (400 dirhams) per month for domestic or agricultural workers working for local individual employers to \$164 (600 dirhams per month) for construction workers working for companies to much higher salaries for highly skilled employees working for multinational companies. Compensation packages generally provide housing or housing allowances.

The Government reportedly is concerned about the low standard of living of some foreign workers and was engaged during the year in discussions to implement a minimum wage range. The Labor and Social Affairs Ministry reviews labor contracts and does not approve any contract that stipulates a clearly unacceptable wage (see Section 6.b.).

Most foreign workers receive either employer-provided housing or housing allowances, medical care, and homeward passage from their employers. Most foreign workers do not earn the monthly minimum salary of \$1,090 (3,924 dirhams) or \$817 (2,941 dirhams), when a housing allowance is provided in addition to the salary required to obtain residency permits for their families.

There are frequent local newspaper reports regarding the non-payment of wages to foreign workers. In March the local press reported that 61 laborers from India and Bangladesh had filed a case with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs claiming that their employer had not paid them for 11 months. In June 500 South Asian employees of a large Dubai construction company gathered in front of the Labor Ministry in Dubai to protest nonpayment of wages for a period of 3 months. Also in June, the Abu Dhabi Department of Labor reportedly resolved 3 separate labor disputes involving nonpayment of wages to teachers in a private school, mistreatment of 25 construction company employees, and nonpayment of wages for 2 months to 150 workers at an industrial company.

In an attempt to safeguard workers' rights, the Government in May introduced a new law requiring some employers to deposit monetary guarantees with third-party banks. The purpose of the guarantee was to decrease the growing number of cases in which employees work, sometimes for months, without wages. The amount of the guarantee increases according to the number of workers employed by the depositor. In theory the greater the number of workers employed by a company, the more money will be deposited and the greater the likelihood that workers will be paid in a timely manner. However, the law does not protect all workers. The law exempts from this requirement those companies in which the Government owns a share, banks, insurance firms, petroleum firms, certain hotels, and most large companies fully owned and managed by nationals. However, companies in certain sectors, even if fully owned and managed by citizens, must deposit bank guarantees.

Resident and nonresident foreign nationals are restricted significantly in changing employment. Foreign nationals in specific occupations, primarily professional, may not change employers without first leaving the country for 6 months. Some foreign nationals involved in disputes with employers, particularly in cases in which the employee has signed a contract containing a clause not to compete, may be blacklisted by the employer with immigration authorities, effectively preventing their return for a specified period of time. Employers also have the option to petition to ban from the work force for 6-months any foreign employee who leaves his job without fulfilling the terms of his contract (see Section 2.d.).

The Government is attempting to decrease the incidence of abuse by employers of laws regarding the sponsorship of foreign national employees. In March the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor issued an order granting workers sponsored by closed or bankrupt companies a 6 month grace period in which to transfer their sponsorship to another company. In December 2000, the Government announced that regulations governing applications for work permits would be rigorously enforced. Under the regulations, a company that has one or more employees whose work permit has expired and not been renewed during the 60-day grace period will be barred from employing new staff. However, the rule is enforced unevenly.

The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, municipalities, and civil defense units enforce health and safety standards, and the Government requires every large industrial concern to employ a certified occupational safety officer. However, health and safety standards are not observed uniformly. Press reports in June noted a recently released report of a study conducted by the Ministry of Labor that stated that many industrial establishments fail to observe health and safety regulations, and more than half provide substandard housing and unclean environments, with sometimes as many as 15 workers living in a single room.

Workers' jobs are not protected if they remove themselves from what they consider to be unsafe working conditions. However, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs may require employers to reinstate workers who were dismissed for not performing unsafe work. Injured workers are entitled to fair compensation, and all workers have the right to lodge grievances with Ministry officials, who make an effort to investigate all complaints. However, the Ministry is understaffed and underfunded; complaints and compensation claims are backlogged. Rulings on complaints may be appealed within the Ministry and ultimately to the courts. However, many workers choose not to protest for fear of reprisals or deportation.

Abuse of domestic servants, particularly women, by their employers is prevalent. Allegations include excessive work hours, nonpayment of wages, and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. In February a housemaid attempted to commit suicide because of abuse received from her employer of about 2 months, including

beatings and confinement to a room for 8 days without proper food or bathroom facilities. In March a housemaid was allegedly raped by her employer of about a month.

Domestic servants and agricultural workers are not covered by labor laws and thus face considerable difficulty in obtaining assistance to resolve disputes with employers. Sponsorship and residency laws do not permit most foreign national employees to change employers, and employers normally hold their employees' passports. Because the law does not prohibit this practice, servants do not have the recourse of leaving their employment and returning to their home country or finding another job.

The Emirate of Dubai has taken greater measures than the other emirates in improving working conditions. In April the Emirate of Dubai began enforcing an order banning transport in or through the Emirate of laborers in pick-up trucks and truck trailers that are not designed to transport persons and lack safety features. The measure is aimed at improving worker and traffic safety by requiring employers to transport employees in buses. In 2000 accidents involving such trucks resulted in the deaths of 32 workers and injuries to 340 workers. Twenty-one workers were injured in a single accident in January.

Truck owners who transport workers in violation of the order are subject to fines of \$35 (100 dirhams) and the seizure of their truck for at least a week. Repeat violators will be subject to increased fines and truck seizure periods. Police seized about 351 trucks during the first 2 weeks after the law went into effect.

In May the Emirate of Dubai also announced a plan to increase inspections of construction worksites and factories to ensure that safety regulations are being implemented throughout the Emirate. This measure followed a series of recent accidents at construction sites throughout the country. For example, three workers in Dubai died after a concrete wall fell on them while they were eating breakfast. In Sharjah three workers died from toxic gas inhalation while they were cleaning a sewer. A worker in Sharjah died by falling from the 15th floor of a building. A farm worker in Al-Ain died after being buried alive in sand while digging a well. Five workers were injured and one died in Abu Dhabi after being trapped in sand for 2 hours when a trench collapsed at a construction site. In Ajman a worker died after falling into a well that was under construction. Two workers in Abu Dhabi died after falling from separate high rise buildings that were under construction. A worker in Dubai was crushed to death by a road-rolling machine.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit specifically trafficking in persons, although child smuggling, prostitution, and pornography are crimes. And trafficking in women and children is a problem.

Trafficking in persons involves young boys used as camel jockeys, and women.

There reportedly are as many as hundreds of underage camel jockeys working in the country who are subjected to harsh conditions. Some press reports claim that 2,000 boys have been trafficked to the country over the last 2 years, although this figure appears to be inflated. The largest concentration of camel jockeys is located in Abu Dhabi Emirate, which is home to the country's largest camel racing tracks and associated stables and training facilities.

Credible sources report that almost all camel jockeys are children under the minimum employment age. Reports indicate that small, organized gangs provide the stables with the young boys, who generally are between the ages of 4 and 10. The gangs obtain the youths, usually from poor families in Pakistan and Bangladesh, by kidnaping or, in some instances, buying them from their parents or taking them under false pretenses, and then smuggling them into the country. The boys are often underfed and subjected to crash diets to make them as light as possible. Boys of 4 to 5 years of age are reported to be preferred, although older boys aged 6 to 8 also are used, depending on their size. Some children have reported being beaten while working as jockeys, and others have been injured seriously during races.

Labor regulations prohibit the employment of persons under the age of 15, and a 1993 Presidential Decree prohibits camel jockeys under the age of 15 or who weigh less than 99 pounds (see Section 6.d.).

However, these laws are not enforced. Rather, the Government defers control of camel racing events and the enforcement of rules concerning camel racing, including labor laws prohibiting child labor, to the Camel Racing Association, which is under the chairmanship of Shaikh Hamdan bin Zayid Al-Nahyan, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Many persons who own the camels and employ the children come from powerful local families who have ties to the Government and are in effect above the law. The camel owners are not prosecuted for violations of the labor laws; consequently, the demand for child jockeys continues unrestricted.

There are also other reported types of cases of trafficking in children. According to newspaper reports, in June police rescued an 11-year-old Pakistani boy from an unknown employment situation in Beda-Zayid, a town in the Abu Dhabi Emirate. The boy reportedly was kidnaped from his family by a Pakistani woman in 1998 and brought to Abu Dhabi through Iran under a false name. There is no information that any action was taken by the authorities against the boy's employer. According to a newspaper report published in May, a 6-year old Pakistani boy who had been trafficked to the country along with his family died of severe head injuries allegedly caused by "a fall"—an excuse sometimes given to hospital personnel when injuries are sustained from camel jockeying. The boy's father claimed that an agent who promised them an attractive salary had brought the family to the country. Upon arrival, the family allegedly was informed that a childless family would adopt their children for the sum of \$600 (1,000 dirhams). The family reportedly lived in a makeshift camp in the city of Al-Ain; the couple's daughters and baby born in the country were not given residence visas to remain in the country. The family reportedly approached the Pakistani Embassy, which facilitated their repatriation.

There are credible reports of trafficking in women and girls to the country. There are reports of women and girls who are brought to the country under the false pretense of working in the service sector or as domestic servants, but then are forced into prostitution. It is unclear whether this activity is conducted with the full complicity of the women's citizen sponsors, or whether the women's generally noncitizen agents are exploiting the sponsorship system to engage in illicit activity (see Section 5).

In January Abu Dhabi police rescued a Pakistani woman who had been trafficked to the country with the promise of employment as a domestic servant but who was instead tortured, raped, and forced into prostitution. In April a young Bangladeshi woman who was trafficked to the country was admitted to the Iranian hospital in Dubai after having been raped repeatedly and tortured. The woman allegedly was brought to the country on the promise that she would be employed as a housemaid. A 17-year old Bangladeshi girl sought refuge at the Bangladeshi Embassy after being forced into prostitution by the agent who brought her to the country.

Unconfirmed international press reports have indicated that the country is the destination for trafficking of young women and girls from Iran. Two separate press reports in October 2000 and in February described the break-up by Iranian authorities of a smuggling ring whose members allegedly kidnaped runaway girls and sold them to wealthy men in the Gulf region. One of the press reports cited the sale of the ringleader's own daughter to a citizen for \$11,000.

Prostitution has become an increasingly open phenomenon in recent years, particularly in Dubai (see Section 5). No accurate statistics are available. However, substantial numbers of women and girls appear to be arriving from the countries of the former Soviet Union (including, but not limited to, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Russia), Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Africa, East Asia, and Eastern Europe for temporary stays, during which they engage in prostitution and possibly other activities connected with organized crime. Unconfirmed international press reports suggest there are several thousand prostitutes working in Dubai and the northern emirates, with a somewhat lower number working in Abu Dhabi. There are reports that some hotels bring young women, particularly from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to fill low-paying jobs as dancers. Signing 6-month contracts promising work in the hospitality industry, the women often are required to dance in the local bars of three- and four-star hotels. With little income, encouragement from management, and constant pressure from male customers, many of these women begin supplementing their salaries through prostitution. Those who wish to quit and return home often find it hard to do so because hotel management maintains control of their passports.

The Government does not address specifically the problem of trafficking in women; victims are arrested and prosecuted for violations of prostitution and other laws. While prostitution is acknowledged widely to exist, the Government does not address the issue publicly because of societal sensitivities. In an effort to combat prostitution, the Dubai police conduct special patrols in areas frequented by prostitutes, and the immigration and police forces have formed special units that conduct raids and sting operations in areas known to be frequented by prostitutes. In addition the authorities restrict the number of visas issued to single women between the ages of 30 and 40. However, press reports indicated that airlines and tourism companies continue to obtain visit visas for single women between the ages of 30 and 40.

The punishment for prostitution is lashing, followed by imprisonment. However, there are reports that those arrested for prostitution generally are detained only for a brief period before being deported and blacklisted from reentering the country. When they are made aware of a smuggled child, the police and immigration authorities attempt to repatriate the child and to prosecute or detain, and then deport, those involved in the trafficking ring.

In May three Central European women claimed that they were recruited to work in the country in the hotel business. However, upon their arrival, their local sponsor seized their passports and locked them in a villa with iron grates on the windows. The women claimed that then they were forced to work as prostitutes. The three

women eventually escaped and obtained protection at their country's embassy in Abu Dhabi. They remained under their embassy's protection for approximately a month, after which their passports were returned, and they were permitted to depart the country.

The Kazakhstan Government reported in June that it broke up a trafficking ring that specialized in sending women to the country for prostitution. Five members of the ring were arrested while attempting to board a woman and a 15-year-old girl on a flight to Dubai.

The police and immigration authorities, working together with foreign governments and NGO's have provided shelter for and assistance with the repatriation of underage camel jockeys. Victims of trafficking may seek shelter in their embassies; the Government does not provide assistance to victims. Women arrested as prostitutes are detained, deported, and blacklisted from reentering the country.